



Joanne Manville, virtual assistant

Based in Alington, Exeter, Joanne Manville took the leap from being a successful, employed personal assistant to being a self-employed virtual one.

Mainly work from home, Joanne says it is not relevant to the people that she helps, having clients in Exeter and Plymouth but also all over the UK and even in Canada.

Joanne says: "Having worked for nearly ten years as a Personal Assistant and Executive Assistant, I wanted a new challenge but loved what I did. I had heard about Virtual Assistants through the PA networks I am a member of and wanted a greater variety in my day so it seemed a natural progression.

"I was lucky enough to have some savings from a house sale, so I gave up work completely to focus 100 per cent on the business. It's hard seeing my savings disappearing whilst I build up a client base, but I wouldn't have taken the leap without having that financial security.

Joanne loves the flexibility of working when

and where she wants. She says: "Sometimes I'll work in the house, in my office or the library - and the garden in the summer!

"My last jobs were really busy and pressured and although I still have pressure now, the difference is that I'm in control of it. Every decision I make has a direct effect on the success of my business and whilst that's scary, it's also really exhilarating!"

Joanne's advice to others start-ups is to research and save.

"I spent two months solid doing research to ensure that there was a need for the service I wanted to provide, and that I could make a living from it.

"Make sure you have enough savings to get you through the first six to 12 months. And don't give up! There's so much support out there for people starting their own businesses, you are not alone. Networking has also been great for me, I have met some amazing people and this has been invaluable to keep me going when I have difficult days."



Andrew Neligan moved home to Devon and launched Neligan Financial after saving hard

Neligan Financial

Graduating from university with a business degree in 2001 meant Andrew Neligan's job search coincided with the economic ramifications of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, leaving him with limited options.

He took a role selling Standard Life's products to financial advisers in the city and ended up staying there for seven years, attaining Chartered Financial Planner and Certified Financial Planner™ qualifications.

Andrew says: "Two years ago this month our son was born and without family in the South East we decided it was time to move back home to Devon. This relocation also gave me the chance to start my own business."

In January 2016, Neligan Financial was launched working with business owners to help them visualise, plan for and achieve their ideal retirement.

Based in East Budleigh, Andrew had already saved to start his business.

"My wife and I focussed our efforts on making sure we had enough money saved so we could afford to move, set up the business and cope with a drop in income once I gave up my salary," he explains.

"The hardest part is the uncertainty. And not having the security of a monthly income is pretty tough. But having the autonomy to plough my own furrow is great."

Andrew's advice to others thinking of launching their own company is clear: "Save up more than you think necessary, be clear on what your value is and give it a go. You can always get a job again if it doesn't work out."

Leanne and Roland Gulvin are pictured with the inspiration behind their new business - their twin daughters, Etyenne, left, and Alula (older by seven minutes)

